

Deception, fraud and fraudsters: a preliminary criminological analysis

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Different forms of deception are closely connected with the profile of their perpetrators. They usually they try to disguise, in one or other way, their involvement in criminal activities, in particular in front of victims of criminal offences or agencies of formal and informal social control. Furthermore, violators of criminal law norms very often try to conceal their »criminality« even from themselves, resorting to various techniques of rationalization or »neutralization« of unlawful or immoral behaviour and thus keeping their positive self-image and self-respect. On the other hand, they also cheat the criminal justice system by giving the impression that they oppose the most serious cases of socially harmful or dangerous phenomena and their commission or omission. However, this is not all. Various deceptions and self-deceptions seem to be - to a greater or lesser extent – a constitutive element and probably also an unavoidable dimension of our individual lives and collective practices, i.e., of the perpetual reproduction of social »order«. It is not therefore surprising that we pretend that we can hardly imagine how the world capitalist system would function without continuous »cheating«, for example without a belief in the general good of economic »growth« (and competitive conflict on markets), without ever-present economic propaganda (i.e., publicity and advertising), without the objective illusion of the freedom of the sellers of labour and buyers of commercial goods, without promises of this world »deliverance« (i.e., self-realisation or undisturbed perfect pleasure) by consumer practices (in particular practices connected with one's social status or objects of imaginary constructs)... Last but not least, we are asking ourselves whether a deep, distasteful feeling of being cheated is not precisely one of the most important elements of (post)transitional or post-socialist »awareness«, connected with the widespread opinion that »we have been shamelessly fooled by the former and the new representatives of social elites« and - even worse –the impression that that they have not yet tired of doing it.

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